

## I-40 Crosstown Relocation Making Progress

A little over one year after a groundbreaking ceremony that marked the beginning of construction of one the most ambitious road projects in Oklahoma, state transportation officials delivered a progress report on the construction of the I-40 Crosstown Relocation Project.

The groundbreaking itself, which took place in November 2005, was the culmination of a decade of preparation by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) and partnerships with city and community leaders, neighborhood groups, congressional leaders and federal transportation officials.

ODOT staff detailed the early progress made on the first phases of construction, access points to the final alignment, and impacts on traffic flow, a local park and a projected timeline of milestones. The very first construction that started last year was a \$6.8 million contract to build three bridges over the Bricktown Canal, where I-40 will begin coming from the east to veer south of downtown.

Construction has been organized in sections, with several projects making up each section, and a phasing sequence that follows a critical path method, which establishes the order of projects and



John Bowman, Project Engineer with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, details the progress on the I-40 Crosstown Relocation Project. Significant progress has been made in the past year.

construction to keep the majority of traffic flowing. A definitive timeline will likely be released in the coming month.

John Bowman, Project Development Engineer, said that the offset alignment of Alternate D - which creates a new pathway just south of the current roadway – allows for the vast majority of construction to occur with little interruption to everyday traffic. Bowman said that traf-

fic may be impacted once access points are constructed, which would affect a variety of city streets.

The new expressway is designed to carry up to 173,000 vehicles per day, replacing the badly worn stretch of I-40 through downtown Oklahoma City. The existing expressway between May Avenue and the Ft. Smith junction of I-35 was ...See "I-40 Crosstown" on page two.

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## Region Opts into New EPA Program

Although Central Oklahoma continues to remain in compliance with the 8-hour federal ozone standard, elevated readings last summer have prompted regional leaders to explore strategies that will improve air quality and to continue to seriously address the possibilities of violating national air quality standards. A group of clean air stakeholders, led by ACOG and the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, are opting into a

new program that might assist the Central Oklahoma region should it reach air pollution levels that would violate federal air quality limits.

Last spring, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) introduced a new initiative called the 8-Hour Ozone Flex program (8-Hr O<sub>3</sub> Flex). The purpose of the program is to support and reward innovative, voluntary, local strategies ...See "New EPA Program" on page two.

# Central Oklahomans Asked to Comment on Plan

Central Oklahomans are invited to participate and comment on the proposed Public Participation Plan (PPP) for the Oklahoma City Area Regional Transportation Study (OCARTS) area. The OCARTS area includes all of Oklahoma and Cleveland Counties and portions of Canadian, Grady, Logan and McClain counties.

The participation plan updates the methods, timelines and public involvement activities that will assist with the development of the 2035 OCARTS Plan, the annual update of the Transportation Improvement Program and ongoing public involvement and education activities and planning initiatives.

The objectives of the PPP are to promote open communication, provide complete information, timely public notice,

full access to key decisions and early and continuing public involvement in the planning process.

The Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG), which serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is responsible for developing long and short range transportation plans in coordination with area cities, towns, counties and local, state and federal transportation agencies.

Under federal regulations, the MPO is required to adopt a formal public participation plan that identifies methods

of engaging the public and promotes opportunities for citizens to be involved with the transportation planning process. The new process is part of the federal transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU, which went into effect last year.

The comment period on the proposed Public Participation Plan runs from January 15 to February 28. Copies of the PPP are available at Oklahoma County metropolitan libraries, by calling Randy Entz or J.A. Church at ACOG at 234-2264, or by download from ACOG's Web site at [www.acogok.org](http://www.acogok.org).

## "I-40 Crosstown"

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originally designed to carry 72,000 vehicles per day, although it now carries nearly 120,000 per day.

Bowman also reiterated the emphasis on aesthetic elements of the realignment. A steering committee has been developing elements on bridges and retaining walls that will be pleasing to the eye but not distracting. When the current bridge comes down to street level, the entire view of downtown Oklahoma City from the south will change dramatically. "Very few communities have an opportunity to present a whole new front door for their city," Bowman said. "This is a once in a lifetime event."

Union station will not be directly impacted by the construction of I-40. The new interstate will be constructed to the

south of the Union Pacific line, allowing the interstate and railroad to provide transportation services in the same corridor. The integrity of the historic train station will be maintained as the Union Pacific line will remain in place allowing it to serve as a passenger rail station in the future if desired. The design will allow adequate space between the Union Pacific line and Union Station for a second track for passenger rail loading.

The I-40 Crosstown, estimated at \$360 million, is expected to be complete in late 2008 with construction of a new, tree-lined, street-level boulevard into downtown taking an additional two years. A study of the future boulevard, led by the Core to Shore Committee (See "Around the Region," page 3) is currently being conducted.

## "New EPA Program"

...Continued from page one.

to reduce ground-level ozone, thereby improving air quality and helping areas maintain attainment with the federal ozone regulations. It is available only to areas that are currently in full compliance with federal ozone standards.

The program is the third generation of programs designed to allow participating communities greater flexibility with selecting emission reduction programs and strategies. By providing local control of the process, these programs recognize that each region has distinct emission

characteristics and socioeconomic variables that make a standardized approach unrealistic and unrepresentative.

Working together with local, state and federal officials, some of the essential facets of the 8-Hr O<sub>3</sub> Flex plan will include early planning, implementation of emission reduction measures, broad-based public input and local control, and state support to ensure the technical integrity of the plan. As long as the 8-Hr O<sub>3</sub> Flex agreement and control measures are implemented, EPA will likely exercise ...See "8-Hr O<sub>3</sub> Flex" on page four.

### Central Oklahoma *Perspective*

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#### Association of Central Oklahoma Governments

*"Providing Regional Leadership in  
Central Oklahoma Since 1966"*

Established in 1966, the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) is a voluntary association of cities, towns and counties. ACOG helps member governments plan for common needs, cooperate for mutual benefit and coordinate for sound regional development.

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Central Oklahoma Perspective, printed in house, is authorized by the ACOG Board of Directors. Financing is partly provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of Transportation and local dues. 1,850 copies were prepared and distributed at a cost of \$944. Copies have been deposited with the Publications Clearinghouse of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries.

# State Stamp to Honor Centennial

Oh, what a beautiful stamp! On January 11, the U.S. Postal Service will celebrate the 100th birthday of Oklahoma's statehood with the issuance of the Oklahoma Statehood stamp in Oklahoma City.

Oklahoma became the 46th state on Nov. 16, 1907. The stamp is a painting by Oklahoma artist Mike Larsen. In the painting, morning sunlight touches the waters of the Cimarron River. Featured in the right corner of the stamp design are the words, "Oh, what a beautiful mornin'...", a popular song from the musical "Oklahoma!," by Rodgers and Hammerstein.



For many people, the name "Cimarron" conjures up images of the Old West. Along the banks of this storied river ran the southern branch of the Santa Fe Trail. Following the Civil War, cowboys drove millions of cattle across the Cimarron as they made their way north to Kansas along the Chisholm Trail. And in 1889, would-be settlers poured across the river in the first of several government-sponsored "land runs." President Theodore Roosevelt signed a proclamation to admit Oklahoma to the Union, which merged two entities: the Indian Territory and the Oklahoma Territory.

Through the years, the people of Oklahoma have made many contributions to our nation's heritage. "From the Native Americans who first settled this land to the Boomers and Sooners who hoped to sow better lives in the tall grass prairie," wrote Governor Brad Henry in October 2004, "Oklahomans have always been pioneers, overcoming obstacles through talent, ingenuity and determination."

The Centennial Commission is encouraging Oklahomans to buy the stamp on January 11 to help promote the state's history and 100-year celebration.



## Around the Region

- Some familiar faces will be seen around the Capitol complex as three television media veterans have been named to public sector positions.

**Dick Pryor**, formerly with **OETA-TV**, was named Lt. Gov. **Jari Askins'** new chief of staff. **Jack Damrill**, formerly of **KFOR-TV**, has joined the **Oklahoma Turnpike Authority** as a public information officer, and **Terri Watkins**, long time reporter for **KOCO-TV**, will serve the same role in a newly created position for the State Auditor and Inspector's Office.

- Guthrie** was nominated **Oklahoma's Favorite Small Town in 2006**. The designation stems from a media contest sponsored by **NewsOK.com**. Guthrie beat out nine other towns across the state. The community is well known throughout the region for its distinctive architecture, downtown Main Street, bed and breakfast inns and its roots in history and film making. **ACOG** boardmember and **Mayor Jon Gumerson** said that he was flattered with the distinction.

- Voters in **Yukon** last month approved a quarter-cent sales tax that will be used to acquire land and build a police station and expand the **Canadian Valley Regional Hospital**.

- Shawn O'Leary** joins the city of **Norman** staff as the new **Director of Public Works**. O'Leary previously served the city of Salina, Kansas. He has 22 years of professional experience in the engineering and public works field. O'Leary will be taking over for **Jimmy Berry** who retired last month.

- ACOG's Clean Cities** program applied for and received a **U.S. Department of Energy** grant for \$50,000

that will fund a two-year school bus idle reduction project. The project will reduce diesel emissions in the Central Oklahoma region and qualifies ACOG and project partners, the **Oklahoma Dept. of Environmental Quality** and **Choctaw-Nicoma Park Public Schools**, to become **Blue Skyways** Collaborative partners. The Blue Skyways program recognizes communities, school districts, organizations and businesses that undertake voluntary initiatives to reduce air emissions.

- The **City of Oklahoma City** held the first of two public meetings last month to discuss a study that is being conducted on the development opportunities that will arise from the realignment of the I-40 freeway. The project, know as the **Core to Shore Planning Study**, will look at public and private sector participation and how to best utilize and plan the urban space that will arise from the existing I-40 as it transitions to a ground-level boulevard, and becomes a gateway to downtown. The Committee, which includes 35 regional stakeholders, will hold another public meeting in March, and will develop a long-term plan that includes recommendations and phases.



A Core to Shore Committee is studying the planning area between the Oklahoma River and I-40.

# "8-Hr O<sub>3</sub> Flex"

...Continued from page two. discretion in designating Central Oklahoma "non-attainment" should the region produce ozone levels that violate the air quality standard for ozone.

Central Oklahoma has a long history of good air quality thanks in part to participation in the voluntary programs offered by the EPA. In addition to educational efforts such as the Clean Air Alert Day Program, the Clean Cities Program and the annual public education campaign, stakeholders have committed or participated in previous initiatives such as the Flexible Attainment Region program, 1-Hour Ozone Flex agreement and the current Early Action Compact (which expires this spring).

In order to provide ongoing air quality improvements, and to avoid non-attainment status as a result of high readings during the 2007 ozone season, it is recommended that an action plan be in place by the beginning of May 2007. ACOG staff and staff from the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality are currently in the pro-

<b>ACOG Calendar</b>	
<b>January</b>	
1st	ACOG Offices Closed for New Years Day
11th	Intermodal Transportation Technical Committee, 10 a.m. Special Meeting ITTC, 1:30 p.m.
15th	ACOG Offices Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
16th	Operation FireSAFE, 10 a.m. Clean Cities Stakeholders, 1:30 p.m.
25th	9-1-1 Board of Directors, 1 p.m. Intermodal Transportation Policy Committee, 1:20 p.m. ACOG Board of Directors, 1:45 p.m. Garber-Wellington Policy Committee, 2:30 p.m.
<b>February</b>	
8th	Intermodal Transportation Technical Committee, 10 a.m.
19th	ACOG Offices Closed for President's Day
22th	9-1-1 Board of Directors, 1 p.m. Intermodal Transportation Policy Committee, 1:20 p.m. ACOG Board of Directors, 1:45 p.m. Garber-Wellington Policy Committee, 2:30 p.m.

cess of developing ozone emission reduction strategies that will be submitted to area stakeholders and the EPA in

the spring of 2007 in order to meet this deadline.

For more, contact Doug Rex, ACOG.

## Central Oklahoma *Perspective*

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